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SUBJECT: THE MALAYSIAN MARITIME LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY -- A
JAPANESE SNAPSHOT

1. (SBU) Summary: The Japanese Embassy in Kuala Lumpur provided to its Trilateral Strategic Dialogue partners a summary version of its assessment of the Malaysian Maritime Law Enforcement Agency (MMEA). The seven-page brief reflects information culled from extensive engagement by the GOJ with the MMEA over the last several years, including embedding a Japanese Coast Guard officer with the MMEA, but was heavily filtered for distribution. The summary lays out the organizational structure, resources, and activities to date of the MMEA. It also identifies Japan's priority areas for donor support: vessel operation, criminal detection, and education and training. We have forwarded the original summary to EAP/MTS. End Summary.

MMEA -- The Organization

2. (SBU) The Japanese brief notes that the MMEA was launched in February, 2005 under the Prime Minister's Department under the charge of the Deputy Prime Minister. It began operations in November, 2005 and is headed by a Director General (a four-star Navy Admiral seconded to the MMEA), and three Deputy Directors (two-star admirals and one civilian), with responsibilities respectively for Operations, Logistics, and Management. The education and training portfolio falls under the Director General's Secretariat.

3. (SBU) As of the September 2007 report, the MMEA had 4,026 approved billets, of which 2,216 are filled with 2,044 uniformed personnel, and an additional 172 non-uniformed. MMEA personnel were employed in the Agency's headquarters, in five regions (Langkawi, Johor, Kuantan, Kuching, and Kota Kinabalu), 18 district bases, 18 bases, and 7 posts. The vast majority of MMEA active duty personnel were recruited from the Navy. Personnel continue to receive training at the Navy's academy while the MMEA completes construction of its own facilities.

Activities and Resources

4. (SBU) The mandate of the MMEA includes: the conduct of law enforcement at sea; search and rescue operations; prevention of piracy, drug trafficking, illegal immigration, smuggling, and pollution. According to the Japanese brief, the MMEA conducts approximately a dozen search and rescue/distress call response operations per month. (Note: The MMEA took over operation of the Malaysian Sea Surveillance System (MSSS) in November of 2005, which ultimately will cover both the Straits of Malacca as well as the tri-border region along the east coast of Sabah. On

January 25, the GOJ announced a USD4.4M grant to the MMEA to upgrade the MSSS.)

15. (SBU) The MMEA has 111 vessels in its fleet. Of these, 70 were transferred from other agencies) two of them are 75m in length, while the other vessels measure less than 39m. The MMEA has recently acquired two new high-speed 18m vessels and 38 new high-speed 7m vessels. The Nippon Foundation donated a 40m training vessel. The MMEA has three helicopters, two of French origin, currently being flown by Malaysian Air Force pilots seconded to the MMEA.

Assistance Needs

16. (SBU) The Japanese brief notes that, as a new institution, the MMEA is developing on a broad scale. The brief points to three areas where international assistance is lacking. Regarding vessel operation, there is a need for know-how as the MMEA seeks to effectively manage the personnel and vessels of a very diverse, often second-hand antiquated fleet. The MMEA has a statutory prosecutorial role in addition to that of crime detection and prevention. The brief notes that bolstering the MMEA's crime detection capability will help insure more effective prevention and deterrence. Finally, the report recognizes that the MMEA is only just establishing its own training and capacity building facilities and, meanwhile, that it needs external support for training and human resource development.

Comment

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17. (SBU/FOUO) The Japanese summary information on the MMEA characterized here generally tracks with that reported from Embassy Kuala Lumpur. The summary report obviously reflects only a small subset of the collected information Japan has gained from its work with the MMEA. As Embassy KL targets increased engagement with the MMEA, we will continue to coordinate and seek grater information sharing with our Japanese counterparts.
KEITH